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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1753

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHSS/OECD POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 1656

RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 1798

RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0258

RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 1402

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 6798

RHMFIS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEUITH/AFOSI 52 FIS ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000088

SIPDIS

DESK PLEASE PASS TO H FOR CONGRESSMAN HASTINGS AND STAFF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/18/2020

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [OREP](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: CODEL HASTINGS HIGHLIGHTS HUMAN RIGHTS

Classified By: POL Counselor Daniel O'Grady for reasons 1.4(b,d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a January 4-6 visit to Ankara, U.S. Representative Hastings (D-Florida) met with leaders of government, the Turkish General Staff and human rights organizations to discuss Turkey-US relations and regional developments. With the TGS, Rep. Hasting underscored the importance of strong Turkey-Israel relations for stability in the broader region and urged Turkey to take concrete steps to improve these ties. President Gul told Rep. Hastings that although Turkey does not want to make Armenian withdrawal from five of seven Azerbaijani provinces a prerequisite for passage of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols, it would be difficult to pass the protocols given the current political environment without such a move by Armenia. In a separate meeting, FM Davutoglu told the Congressman that he had visited Syria extensively in order to press for continued dialogue and a solution between Syria and Israel. Human rights activists complained that the government's National Unity Project had not taken any concrete steps in increasing recognition of the rights of ethnic minorities in Turkey. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In a January 5 meeting with U.S. Representative Alcee Hastings (D-Florida), President Abdullah Gul stressed that there is at least 90 percent overlap between Turkish and US foreign policy interests and Congressman Hastings agreed. Gul stated that Namik Tan, who had been Gul's spokesman when he was Foreign Minister, would be the next Ambassador to the US and that there was a strong degree of trust between the two. Gul said that Turkey does not want frozen conflicts in the region because they tend to flare up suddenly. Specifically, although Turkey did not want to make Armenia withdrawal from five of seven Azerbaijani provinces a prerequisite for passage of the protocols, Gul admitted that it would be difficult to pass the protocols given the current political environment without such a move by Armenia. Gul was upbeat about relations with Syria, stressing that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad was young and European educated. Assad is confident and secure and recognizes that Syria's place is with the west, according to Gul. Finally, Gul sees a solution with Iran coming from "gentle engagement" to open a road they can easily walk down. Hastings stressed that the US was trying to open a door with Iran, but was rebuffed at every turn, and asked for Turkey's support to open up a

dialogue.

¶3. (C) In a January 6 meeting, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told Congressman Hastings that he had visited Syria extensively in order to press for continued dialogue and a solution between Syria and Israel -- 41 trips in the past year alone. Davutoglu also lamented Israel's Gaza offensive and Israel's continued movement forward on settlements in Gaza -- both of which he sees as stumbling blocks for peace in the Middle East. He also stressed that he was optimistic that a deal could be brokered with Iran, and worried about the effect of Iran sanctions on neighboring countries, like Turkey. Davutoglu repeated that Turkey and the US have numerous overlapping interests and that he wants to define a "model partnership" between Turkey and the US for the future.

¶4. (C) During a January 6 meeting with key human rights leaders hosted by the Charge, Congressman Hastings stressed his continuing commitments to human rights both in the US and in Turkey through the Helsinki Commission. Leaders from major human rights organizations stressed that discrimination remained a problem in Turkey: against Kurds and other ethnic minorities, Muslim and non-Muslim religious minorities, and sexual minorities, among others. The government's National Unity Project, the leaders argued, had not taken any concrete steps forward in increasing recognition of the rights of any of these groups within the country.

¶5. (C) During a meeting January 6 with Deputy Chief of the Turkish General Staff General Bilgen Balanli, Congressman

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Hastings expressed appreciation for Turkey's contributions to Afghanistan, especially on training Afghanis so that they can take on responsibility for security. He explained how important strong Turkey-Israel relations are for stability in the broader region and urged Turkey to take concrete steps to improve ties. Hastings also mentioned the US goal of providing a defense against the growing missile threat to NATO allies and asked Turkey to consider carefully a contribution to this effort. Balanli agreed that relations with Israel were essential and said that the military-to-military relationship remained strong despite the turbulence in political relations. On Missile Defense, Balanli said that the next key step would be to get political agreement -- most likely at NATO -- from Turkey's civilian leaders, and then the military would work out the details.

¶6. (U) Congressman Hastings was accompanied by Lale Mamaux, Hastings' Chief of Staff, Alex Johnson, staff member from the Helsinki Commission, and Linda Allen, staff member from the House Intelligence Committee. During his visit, Congressman Hastings expressed a strong interest in bringing members of the Congressional Black Caucus to Turkey in Fall of 2010.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Congressman Hasting's visit was timely given his history in the region and his clear understanding of the myriad of issues facing Turkey. He strengthened our messages across the board and also demonstrated to our human rights contacts that the US remains strongly interested at all levels of government in improving the human rights situation in Turkey.
Jeffrey

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